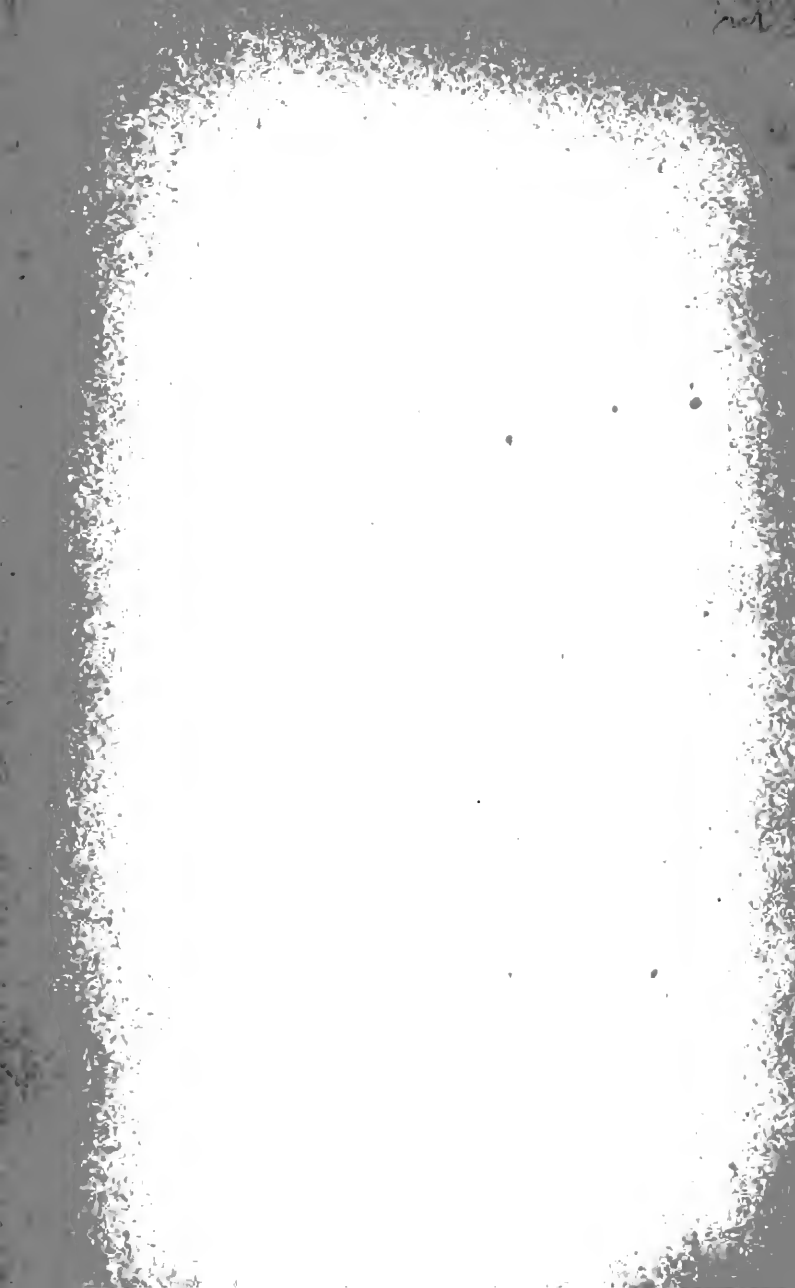


ANIMA CHRISTI.

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ANIMA CHRISTI



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BY
J. S. FLETCHER

BRADFORD :
J. S. FLETCHER & CO. '9 NEW INN BUILDINGS
THORNTON ROAD
1884

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O Soul of Christ Whom, seeing not, we know,
O Mighty Influence working by strange ways
Unto the destined end, be Thine the praise
That any soul is brought from endless woe,
From suffering and the life which is below
Unto the searching presence of the blaze
Of Thy High Heaven. Here in this worldly maze,
Where few friends are and mighty is the foe,
We wander, looking upward to Thy Heaven,
Sinning and sinned against from day to day,
Soul-sick, mind-tossed, and sometimes from Thee driven,
Yet not by Thee permitted far to stray.
Ah the blest joy when we, from all sin shriven,
O Soul of Christ, shall be with Thee for aye!



PART THE FIRST.



PART THE FIRST.

I.—i.

I believe in nothing whatever, for life is a sham
and a lie,—

Life with its wonderful shiftings and ceaseless
changes of scene,

Which has come to me unasked, and is passing
me quickly by,

So quickly that soon 'twill have gone altogether,
and I shall have been.

ii.

And I know not if 'tis worth living, but live it I
will and must,
Where it will lead to I know not, nor care, but
one thing I know,—
There is no such thing as a God, be He cruel
and faithless, or just ;
Nor is there eternal gladness or never-ending
woe.

iii.

A God? O mad, fond blindness, that men should
be such fools
As to dream of something better than what
themselves they are !
Away with all their precepts and the learning of
their schools,
And their dogmatised theology imported from
afar !

iv.

Gods and religions and systems—there must be
a thousand or more,
If each God-believing sect is, as it thinks it is,
quite in the right :
List to them now, just listen, how they bellow
and wrangle and roar,
And keep up their wordy mouthings through day
and through eve and through night !

v.

Which of them has it ? Why, none ; they are all
of them liars and knaves,
All preaching and praying for gold, and
hugging themselves in fear
Of their lucre slipping away, ah, yes, they are
thorough slaves
To their own base motives—keep off them, and
go not near.

vi.

For their fever is highly infectious and might
seize one. But which of the lot
Should one take as a prophet where each thinks
the other is wrong ?
For one says his is the true faith, and another
bawls out it is not,
And the noise is more than confusing, yet
somehow they all jog along.

vii.

And Papist elbows Protestant, and shows him
the stake and the fire,
And grinds in his unwilling ears a babble of
barbarous words,
And moving his puppet-like flocks by some
invisible wire
He sets them to wipe out sin by means of armies
and swords.

viii.

And one, like a clown in a circus, tricks him out
with dresses and gauds,

And lights his candles before him and offers up
the Host,

While another preaches him down with blatant
hurrying words :

And two more wrangle yonder about the Holy
Ghost.

ix.

And one says Christ was God, and another says
Nay, 'tis not so.

And a creature there says the Spirit came both
from Father and Son,

While his neighbour laughs him to scorn, as
though he himself should know,

And tells him with show of learning that It only
proceeded from One.

x.

And each is wrangling and wrangling, and
struggling along in the fight
Of sects and systems and churches, and tells you,
with countenance bold,
That he, as others are wrong, is surely in the
right,
And that there only is one Shepherd, and that
He has but one fold !

• II.—i.

No, I will have no dealing with these :
They may wear out their horny knees
Ere ever I pray to their God to help me !
How can a God that is served in so many ways
Be worthy of praise ?
That I cannot see.

They would doubtless tell me a so-called truth
Out of that strange old book
Their Bible, in which I never look
Except to read a simple story
Which to me is possest of a wondrous glory,
And which is contained in the Book of Ruth.

ii.

For I remember well, too well,
How my mother was wont to tell,
Long years since in the happy hours
Of childhood, how amidst the flowers
And golden stubble, beneath the bright
Eastern skies with their burning light,
Ruth went gleaning in Boaz' sight.
I remember, as though 'twere yesterday,
When my sister and I were tired of play,
How she would call us to her knee

And tell us of Ruth, and bid us be
Like her, obedient, good, and kind.

And now she is dead, and lies enshrined
Down there in the aisle of the little church,
Where she used to make such wondrous
search

After this God that they preach of and pray to.
For she went and prayed there thrice a day.
If any-one knows it, she knew the way to
The heaven one hears of once in a way.

iii.

And when I was a child I used to go
With her to the little church below
In the valley, and listen to what was said
By the surpliced and stoled one overhead,
Who was High in his doctrine, and preached
ex tempore,

And said he could show us the way to glory,
Though he ended by nearly going to jail.
For he and his Bishop could never get on,
And the Parson would have six candles upon
His Holy Altar, and thurify it
With Incense, perhaps to purify it ;
And his reading ended with a wail
Of intonation ; his singing choir,
Who sang while he took time to respire,
Were clothed in short bed-gowns white as
snow,
With a long, black, high-necked garment below,
While he himself was wrapped and covered
In Albes and Copes. He scraped and bowed
When he stood at the Altar, as though there
hovered
Some wonderful being in the Incense-cloud.

And he wouldn't say some of the prayers aloud.
And he preached Real Presence, and called
Confession

A Means of Grace, and said that when death
Took away from the body its life and breath,
The soul didn't go straight off to Heaven,
But was helped to get there by Intercession.
And news of this to the Bishop was given,
Who, being Low Church, and prosy, and old,
And thoroughly Protestant, very soon told
This zealous priest, his Christian brother
Most dearly beloved, to seek out another
Sphere of work, or to drop such preaching,
For he would have no Catholic teaching
Nor Catholic service within his realm.
But this didn't seem to overwhelm
The parson, whose people defended him,

Till at length the Bishop, in sorrow and tears,
Gave him a holiday for three years,
Or, in other words, suspended him.

Yet it did no good his being away,
For his curates did things the very same way,
Maybe adding some details more
In the matter of dresses and candles,—and when
The parson came back to his church again,
All went on as it did before.

iv.

But, as an outsider, I never could see
What sort of a system that might be
Which gave one man, who, as I knew,
Was a very worldly old being, the power
To tell another who was as true
And courteous a one, though spoiled by the blind

Belief in a God which lived in his mind,—
That he only should preach when he, his Lord
In spiritual power, should give him the word.
But of course it was one of these Christians' laws
Of brotherly love. I remember now
How the Bishop and Parson once had a row
Of wordy argument, all because
The latter would preach in a coloured stole,—
Now, what could that have to do with the soul ?

III.

Well, let them wrangle and fight,
Their God and they can make it up at last.
I will have none of them, for I know
When they say there is God that it is not so.
The days of God and Religion are past !
The world is waking all over to own the great
being, Man !

Is Man a thing so weak and slight
As to have to trust on a God which he cannot
see ?

I would sooner the whole race ran
And pressed its native earth with bended knee
To a god of wood, or copper, or stone,
Than that it should trust on a God which it saw
by faith alone.

IV.—i.

Gods were well enough in the days of primeval
earth,
They fitted in with the customs and suited the
savage times,
For they sacrificed babes to them then, which
had only just known birth,
In the hope that the blood-loving being would
smile on their murderous climes.

ii.

We are nothing better now, for men trust what
they do not see,
And look to another world when they shall have
lost their breath
And taken their leave of this one ; so think they,
but as for me,
I know there is no Hereafter, and that Death is
an endless Death.

iii.

Heaven and Hell ? There is neither, and there
certainly is no God
To will man away to either. Ah, well, let them
rest in their faith
In this wondrously mixed-up Something that
could damn them with a nod,
This God and his religion of phantom and of
wraith !

iv.

I will have none of either, I believe in nothing
at all,

I look on all that is with a quite indifferent
mind ;

I hate all priestcraft and praying as though they
were bitterest gall ;

I am a law to myself in myself, and I throw all
else to the wind.

V.—i.

I dreamt last night my mother came and said
That I should not be happy while I kept
These dark dim notions in my head :
And then she went, and, when again I slept,
My sister, golden-haired and azure-eyed,
Who died at ten, came to my side
Dressed in pure white and crowned with stars

Of perfect light, and bade me see
What there was kept in store for me.
She passed away : I woke. Between
The oriel window's oaken bars,
The moon looked in with calm, clear light,
And lit the spot where they had been ;
And lying sleepless through the night,
I wondered what it all might mean.

ii.

I cannot forget that dream,
Why did my mother and sister come, and from
 where?
Can it be that there,
Wherever they are, they can see
What is happening to me?
Howe'er it is so it would seem.
But then, fool that I am,—it is matter for
 laughter,—
How can they know who are dead when there is
 no hereafter.

7.

VI.—i.

'Tis not a pleasant thing to live all alone
With only a dog for one's mate,
It turns a man to a sort of thinking stone,
And makes him dull in his mood,
And apt to think and to brood
Over the special sorrows which are his own.
I would that to be such a man it had not been
my fate.

ii.

I live all alone in the still old castle here,
With lands about me pleasant to see,
And yet not pleasant to me,
Who have nothing whatever upon the earth
To please me, and who from very birth
Have been accustomed to mock and sneer
At all creation and aught of worth.

iii.

Why don't I live as my father before me did ?
Shoot, and hunt, and gamble, and take a wife,
And drink at night, and do, as brute instincts
bid,
And break my neck at last and get out of life

In a hurry. Nay, rather than be such a one
I would follow my mother's plan, and be a saint,
Go thrice a-day to church, and fast in Lent,
And pray till my back were bent,
And live like the poor mad fools that used to run
Over hot plough-shares without complaint.

VII.

Yet rather than be as either, for each ran on to
extremes,

I would be as the little sister who died when she
was ten,

Who comes to me so often in my troubled
midnight dreams,

And makes me long to have her to live with me
here again.

VIII.

I have no cause to be sad,
I have all that can please the heart,
Horses and hounds and money and land,
And all that is good to see,
And yet I am never glad,
But feel as though the brand
Of despair were stamped on the part
Where I fancy my brain to be.

IX.—i.

I have just been down to the village in the dusk
of the dying day,
And heard a labourer talking of me at his
cottage door,
And without a thought of mischief I listened
to what he might say,
Hearing no good of myself, as a fool could have
told me before.

ii.

"I be puzzled with Squire, I be ; he be naught
of a man, sure-ly ;
Don't believe in a God or a Heaven, nor even
a Hell !
And says there 'baint no more o' you arter you
die,
But he aint convinced me it's right, and I don't
think he's convinced hissel.

iii.

"For he allus looks moody, does Squire,
a-poking and podging about,
And reading big books all day, and watching
the stars o' nights ;
With his face an' hands as smooth and white
as a new-washed clout,
And his eyes as burning and bright as the
Parson's altar lights.

iv.

“Parson and Squire don’t mix, as it isn’t likely
they should

When one on ’em says there’s a God, and the
other ’un says there baint.

An’ it allus comes out in th’ nursin’ what’s been
grafted i’ th’ blood,

And we all on us knows that old Squire were
not by no means a saint!

v.

“I don’t ’old noways wi’ Parson, wi’ his dresses
and candles and smells,

Tho’ I weänt say he doesn’t do good, for he’s
powerful kind to the poor.

But I doont agree with his sarvice, and his
singin’ that’s like dogs’ yells,

An’ me and my missus is members at the
Methodis’ Chapel next door.

vi.

“ And Pogson he preached last night 'bout 'ternal
· life and death,

An' he spoke of the fearful torments that summun
would undergo

As didn't believe in a God ; and Sister Snigsby,
she saith

That Pogson meant the Squoire, as she 'appened
pertikler to know !”

X.

Nine years ago to-day
I saw them lay her body in the earth—
My little sister, who from birth
Was ever with me in work or play.
Nine years ago, nine years to-day.
How fair she looked, her face did seem
As though she lay but in a dream,
Yet she was dead and gone. Gone where?

Can it be true that something is there
In the hereafter whereof she
Has solved the eternal mystery,
And that a halo of heavenly grace
Circles around her golden head ?
I do not like to think her dead
For ever, for her calm still face
Wore a bright smile which seemed to say
That life was not all taken away,
That she was not of all bereft,
But that an inner life was left
And gone to some more perfect day.

XI.

I am half in doubt of my creed.
Life is worth living indeed,
If it but the prelude is
To some state of rest and bliss,
But if there is nothing to come after death,
If there be no other life than this,
I begin to think it were best to have done with
 breath.

XII.

I know not where I came across this doubt
That haunts me, mocking at my Godless faith,
And whispering that my creed is but a wraith
Of miserable phantoms, devil-sown,
Breeding sad thought and endless misery,
And likening it to one prolonged groan.
But where or whatever it be
I will somehow fathom it out.

XIII.—i.

I am more and more opprest
With doubts and wonders and fears,
And I went last night to a chest
Which I have not opened for years,
And, not without some tears,
Took from its dust-covered rest
A little Testament bound in red,
Which belonged to my sister who is dead.

And all through the night in the gloom
Of what was once her room,
I sat with a single light, and read
Of the Life of Him Who is called the Church's
 Head,
And of His Death and Doom.

ii.

And, believing nothing, I still could see
Something within this history
That looked like Truth even unto me ;
Till I began to wonder and wonder
However so strange a mystery
As a God who was One, and One in Three,
And who was always and ever asunder,
And yet One Person, could anyway be.

XIV.

I am thoroughly wretched and sad.
Is the creed I have clung to wrong ?
Is there a God, is there another world ?
Is there a Heaven ? Is there a Hell,
Where the damned will be suddenly hurled
To live in fire for long
Years of fierce torment ? Ah, well,
If I do not somehow these doubts dispel
I shall go mad !

XV.—i.

Ah, tell me, some one, tell me if it all be a sham
and a lie,
This thing that is borne upon me by some
invisible power,
Which steals on my heart and my brain when
no other being is nigh,
Watching for ever by me and whispering, 'every
hour,

ii.

With cruel insidious tongue, strange fancies
which make me afraid,
Fancies that tell me my life has been nothing
but sorrow and sin,
Spent in the dark, dread presence of a devil
that casts a deep shade
Over the life of all to whom he enters in.

iii.

I am in shadow enough, no doubt, but where is
the light ?
Where is the star of hope ? Where is the sun
for my day ?
Where is the one that shall guide me out of
this awful night
Where I roam with never a being to whom I
can look or pray ?

iv.

Is there nothing in life to live for, nothing to do
or to be ?

Must I always be steeped in these fancies,
always tormented with fear ?

Is there none in this vast world to come and be
with me,

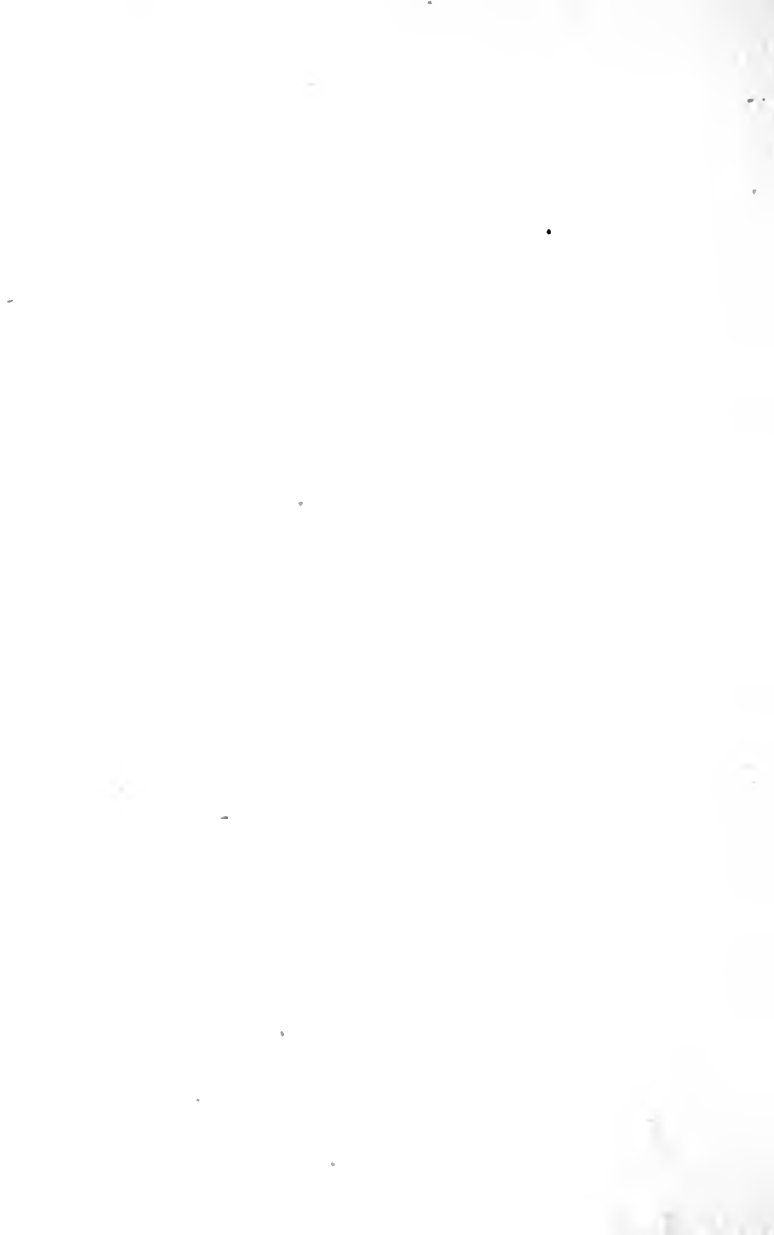
Who would bear with my sin and my sorrow,
and hold me a little dear ?

XVI.

O lost in the black abysses of this damnèd dark
despair,
Where shall my heart find rest, tell me, O tell
me, where ?



PART THE SECOND.



PART THE SECOND.

I.—i.

I have found my rest.

The shapeless phantoms of my fevered brain

Are gone, are past, are vanished into night.

O heart, rejoice ; they will not come again !

The future lies before thee, clear and white,

The future, filled with happy, happy light,

The future, a bright island of the blest.

ii.

I have found my rest.

The doubts that dwelt within my mind of yore
Are fled far off to some black gulf of hell.

O mind, rejoice ; they will not haunt thee more !

The future lies before thee, promising well,

Like some long stream whose course no man
can tell,

But which looks fair to him that takes the quest.

iii.

I have found my rest.

The night is gone, the clouds are passed away,

And there is risen above my head the star

Of Love, dear Love, who took me from the fray

To battle for him in his own sweet war

Of whispered words and glances that words are,

Wise Love, who knows that Love for man is
best.

iv.

I have found my rest.
The arms of Love are round me evermore,
The voice of Love is in my ear alway.
O golden sun, that from the eastern shore
Castest a path of light across the bay,
Rise higher, higher! Is not this the day
When I shall take my love unto my breast?

v.

I have found my rest.
O sun-lit morning, look upon her now!
O breath of flower and foliage steal to her!
O sunlight, touch the blossoms on her brow,
O Love, be with her wheresoe'er she stir!
For she is all thine own, thy minister,
Whom thou with thine own loveliness hast
blest.

vi.

I have found my rest.

O bridal day, be glad, be fair, be bright !

O time, fly on with love's untrammelled feet

Through happy day to happier, happier night,

And bring me to my own, my love, my sweet,

That all our being in one long kiss may meet,

And I may hear her maiden love confest.

II.—i.

As one that wanders cheerless and forlorn
Through darkened paths ere yet the sun be
 risen :

As one who lies within some loathsome prison
Watching with hungry eyes for signs of morn :
Even as either sees at length the dawn
And cries aloud, clapping his hands in glee,
So did I look for, so do I look on thee.

ii.

As one that drifts across a harbour bar,--
Going out unhelmed beneath the hurrying
breeze :

As one who wanders amid unknown seas
Uncompassed, where all manners of peril are :
Even as either sees at last a star
Shine from the heavens with friendly brilliancy,
So did I look for, so do I look on thee.

III.—i.

O best of All,
O mighty influence that canst never die,
O strange sweet passion, as the summer sky
Cloudless and pure! Whatever men thee call
Still art thou, Love, the same.
What though we know not thee, nor even thy
name,
We feel thy might, thy mystery, and we

Turn from ourselves to thee,
O Love, the power that shalt for ever be !

ii.

We know not what thou art :
And yet we know that thou art Lord and King
Of all that dwells within the human heart.
O pleasant time, O gladness of the spring,
When thou, O Love, with quick, invisible wing,
Lit on my brow and said to care, Depart,
And be at peace : and thou, rest from the smart
Of loveliness ; henceforward thou art mine,
Mine ever, mine alone.

O Love Divine,
O springtime, O sweet madness of the earth,
To wake to love is as a new, bright birth !
Is this the world that once I thought so dark ?

Is this the sky which once I found so drear ?
Are these the woods I cared not for ? But hark,
Bells, from the village belfry old and grey,
Fling happy sound across the wooded park,
Startling the deer that wander there away,
Waking the echoes of the ruins here,
And telling me it is my marriage day.
White day of all the whitest days of spring !
O happy bells, ring on, for ever ring,
It is my marriage day !

IV.

White day of all the whitest days of spring,
Best day of all that I have looked upon,
Why should I wish that thou from me wert
 gone,
But that the night is nigh ? Ah, day, take wing,
And eve, draw near, and bring the stars with
 thee
From watching o'er the ocean's murmuring,

And bid them shine upon my bride and me.
Bid them watch o'er us whom Love hath
ordained

To Love's own service. Dost thou linger, Day?
Nay, linger not, we would not have thee stay,
Fly thou and leave us to our own delight :
Love, being blind, hath never need of light :
Go now, but come when the moon's beams have
waned,

Come then, attended by the sweet spring dawn
And call us back from Love's first ecstasy
Into the blushing presence of the morn ;
But now, O Day, go by, and let us be !

V.

Here is a song which I have made for you,—

Where the still sunlit garden reposes,
Shut in from the rest of the land
By woods and by streams and by closes,
Which stretch to the wave-washed strand
Of shingle and rock and brown-sand,
In front of the white-breasted sea,
There are thousands and thousands of roses,
But never a rose like Thee !

I have read in some old eastern story,
Some legend of long, long ago,
Of a flower that was clothed with all glory,
A flower that had petals like snow :
And the flower of the legend I know
Was fair as a fair flower can be ;
But no flower of legend or story
Is like unto Thee !

VI.—i.

A light on the cliffs by the sea ?—
Nay, it is only a star that peeps over the hill,
A star that came out from the heavens of its
 own sweet will,
And is wandering slowly across the deserted
 shore
To gaze for awhile on thee,
And to see itself eclipsed and its brightness
 made poor
By the light of the eyes which are brighter than
 stars to me.

ii.

That are brighter than stars to me !

There is no light like the light of the eyes that

I love ;

Not all the stars that are there in the heaven
above,

Not all the myriad lights that glimmer and
glance on the sea,

Are bright as the eyes which will smile upon
mine always ;

Not even the cloudless skies of a sunny day

Are bright as the dear blue eyes which shall be

My stars for ever and aye.

iii.

My stars for ever and aye.

Love that is mighty and true hath said they
shall be,

Love that is Lord over all hath made his decree,

And bade me to serve in his courts, not by year,
nor by day,

But for ever and ever, and I will obey his behest.
Love, that is Lord over all, does he not know
best

What is best for us all? So for ever and ever
I will love thee and thou shalt love me, and we
two shall part never !

VII.—i.

What if the world should not go on for ever,
What though there be no other life than this,
What if the grave be our sole end and aim ?
Even then our life of love will be the same.
That shall not spoil our three-days-wedded bliss.
Ah, little one, why will you thus endeavour
To show me that I am indeed to blame
In daring to deny your God, why wonder

That I believe in nothing, and why ponder,
O sweetest preacher, with those downcast eyes,
On the stern fact that I, who am so wise
In your opinion, should refuse to see
That there is aught amiss or wrong in me,
Because I do not choose the creed to say,
Because I will not kneel down twice a day
As you in your sweet innocent whiteness do?
Well, never mind.—See, I will pray to you,
And you shall grant me everything I ask,
And bid me do whate'er you wish ; the task
Will be sweet Love's, and He is now my God.
Am I not ready to obey each nod,
Each rule of His? He is the God for me,
You his High-Priest !

ii.

You would not have me be

Like the old parson in our church at home ?
Why, Pogson, at the chapel, says that he,
With his fine dress and endless mummary,
Is half, or more than half, a child of Rome !
Let's hope she's a good mother, and that she
Will own this child that's half hers, and half—
whose ?

What do you say ? You would not like to lose
The dear old father ? Well, for aught I care,
The reverend sir can stop for ever there ;
And you can go and pray with him, you know,
As many times as e'er you care to go,
And see what Pogson calls his mummary
All Sunday through, and I will wait outside
Till Holy Church has finished with my bride,
And she can come and give an hour to me,
Who love her more for all this innocence,
This pretty care, this sanctity intense,

And would not have her that which I must be.
No, darling, keep your faith. What do you say ?
That you will never cease to watch and pray
For me as well, that I may come to see
How good God is ? My sweet one, watch away ;
If He is half as good as you, why then
He is ten thousand times too good for men.
I should not say such things ? Ah, but you
 know,
I think you perfect, and I shall say so !

VIII.—i.

Ah, let me never wake
If this be but a dream,
If this sweet hand which in my own I take
Be not what it seem,
If the clear lovelit gleam
Of those dear eyes be but a fancy, brought
From out a fevered brain,
From out a mind o'erwrought,
Let me not wake, let me not live again !

ii.

Let me sleep on for aye.

Yes, let me dream that I have once been loved,
Have known for once a perfect, cloudless day
In the dark dulness of this life, and moved
Once through bright paths o'er which no shadow
lay.

If this be but a sleep,

O let me sleep for ever and for ever !

O let me dream that once mine eyes did weep
Warm tears of love and gladness, let me know,
If but in sleep, of love the passionate flow
And sudden joy. O, if this should be so,
Let me wake never !

IX.

Yes, and indeed this Love of mine shall be
A very God, a very Lord to me.
O Thou unknown and fabled Deity,
Whom some, by superstitious fear made blind,
Profess to find in every breath of wind,
In every blade of grass, in every flower,
If Thou indeed dost live, if there is *Thee*
In aught about me, show it me this hour !
Show me, Thou God, if God Thou art, Thy
power.

See how I mock Thee ! Nay, but Thou art not.
See how I scorn Thee ! Let it not be forgot.
God ? O pale myth, Thou art not, shalt not be :
Keep Thine own place, Man hath no need of
Thee,

No need, no need, O fabled One !

But see,

For I would dare Thee aught whom I not know,
If thou art God, prove it that Thou art so.
Here, stay at once, show me Thy hand, God,
show.

Need'st Thou some means ? Then, if a God
Thou be,

Snatch from my life what is most dear to me !

X.

I know not if I wake or if I sleep,
But if I sleep, I dream.—O let me wake !
Begone ye damnèd shapes, begone, I say,
God, if Thou be a God, cast them away !
See, how they drag me downwards to the deep ;
See, how they mock my agony and creep
Into my brain and heart and life, and make
All things another Hell. O let me die.
Save me, O save me !

There is some one by.
What, is it night, and do I dream? Have I
Been sleeping long or am I ill? And why
Do you all speak in whispers? Who is this?
And where is—

O like a flash of light I know,
I know it all, 'tis burnt upon my brain,
'Tis stamped upon my heart and in my life.
O let me die! She can not come again,
Did I not see her dead?

O the black woe!
Five days, but five short days of spring my wife,
And gone.

See, she is there, is there.
Ah, darling, take me to thee! What, you too,
My sister, with your long, bright, golden hair

Radiant in stars—both fair as when I knew
You both and kissed you. Let me kiss you now,
Sister and wife.

Nay, see, upon my brow
Sits a black devil ; touch me not, but flee !
Ah God, I pray Thee, take my life from me !

XI.

Ah God, from off my brain
Take this black curse, this fierce undying pain,
Take it away! I own Thee, Thou art God!
God, by the might of Thy Almighty Power,
God, by the weight of Thy chastising rod,
God, by the prayers that seek Thee every hour,
Why hast Thou taken all I loved from me?
God, Thou art God, and Thou hast won. Yet
see,
Thou Being of Power and Pride and Cruelty,
I own Thy sway, but I will serve Thee never.
God, wheresoe'er Thou art, whate'er Thou be,
I will curse Thee for ever and for ever!

XII.—i.

I am alone ; alone in a world that is but a
fleeting show,

A world which has proved so vile that I should
not in it linger

If I had but the pluck of a man. God ! it were
easy to go !

Here is the very thing to do it with. The pull
of a finger

ii.

Would send this bit of lead through my brain
with a smash and a crash.

How easy it were to do it and get from the
light !

Here goes.—But when did I ever do anything
rash ?

I will think it over once more, and besides—that
vision last night.

iii.

Vision of wife and mother and sister robed in
white,

Star-crowned and carrying palms and smiling
all on me,

And a whisper which seemed to say "In the
land of endless light,

We are waiting, O thou whom we love, waiting
to welcome thee !"

iv.

In the land of endless light? Where is it?
Thou God whom I hate,
Thou Despot that snatched away my five-days'
bride from me,
Dost Thou, in Thy mighty mind, which Thy
followers teach is great,
Know where in space or creation any such land
may be?

XIII.

I will go down to the church and stand by her
grave awhile.

'Tis eighteen months to-day since she gave me
her last sweet smile

And went to swift death ! Why went she ?

Ah wife, with the soul so white,
I would give—what would I not give—to be
where thou art to-night !

XIV.—i.

O'er the soft brown autumn meadows steals the
last light of the sun,
Falling softly, shortening quickly, telling me that
day is done,
Telling me that day is over, gone another day
from me,
O my darling, let it perish if it brings me nearer
thee!

ii.

Roses blossom o'er thy bosom, O my rose I see
not now,
Lilies white are lying o'er thee, not so white as
- was thy brow,
Flowers have sprung to life above thee where
thou liest still and dead,
With the cross which thou so lovedst standing
silent at thy head.

iii.

O my wife, my love, my lost one, would that
thou wert here with me !
Would that I might draw thee to me with the
hand I gave to thee,
Would that thou couldst teach me patience,
would that thou mightst take my hand
In thine own, and lead me onward to some far
off mystic land

iv.

Where is never sin or sorrow, where is neither
fear nor shame,
Where no crowd of mortals hurries after un-
enduring fame,
Where the light is clear and cloudless as the
twilight heaven above,
Where is nought of hate or sadness, where is
rest and peace and love.

v.

I have sinned, none knows it better, and my
heart would fain have rest.
O that I could clasp thee to me, hide my sorrows
in thy breast,
Feel thy lips upon my forehead, and thy hand
within my own,
And thy heart pressed close to my heart ere it
harden into stone !

vi.

Vain regrets! for thou hast left me. Shall I
ever see thee more?

Wilt thou meet me when my foot falls on that
distant unknown shore

Which is lying undiscovered, which my feet have
never trod,

Where thy spirit is for ever? But I have no
faith in God.

vii.

I am proud and I would scorn Him, I would
curse Him, I would be

Cursed and outcast for all ages if it had not
been for thee;

But thou lovedst Him, and if He were worthy
of such priceless love as thine

I would love Him, and would fear Him, and
would hail Him all-divine.

viii.

Ah, my lost one, if thou hearest, keep me with
thy strongest prayer !—

Fool, I know not what I ask for, none hath ever
listened there.

Had a wish of man e'er echoed in those space-
less halls on high,

Christ, the One Propitiation, would have had no
need to die.

ix.

No, there is no use in praying, but I would that
thou could'st hear,

That thy voice could speak in whispers, that thy
presence could be near.

There is left in earth no comfort, there remains
no peace for me,

Who have known a very heaven in the love that
was of thee.

x.

Sweet blue eyes that looked all-sweetly in sweet
love upon my own,
Curl-tossed head and lips like roses—these are
from me far-off flown.
Yonder sun will rise to-morrow, though to-night
he leaves the sky.—
Would there were some resurrection for the
blessed ones that die !

xi.

O but I am wretched truly, and my mind with
vague unrest
Tears my heart in myriad pieces ; would that I
might find some rest !
Now that thou art taken from me what have I
to do with life ?
Would to God that I were buried in this grave
with thee, my wife !

xii.

O that thou couldst once more clasp me to thy
bosom warm and white,
Even as thine arms did clasp me at our first
sweet bridal night,
Even as thou then didst press me closely to thy
woman's breast,
Ah, no cry should then escape me as escapes me
now for Rest !



PART THE THIRD.

PART THE THIRD.

I.—i.

I know Thee now ! Ah, let me stay for ever
Here by Thy side, O cast me not away !
Here let me stay, here let me make endeavour
To kiss Thy feet, and serve Thee day by day.

ii.

I have known sin. Who is there of the living
That e'er hath plunged to those black gulfs
of Hell

From which Thy hand hath drawn me, All-
Forgiving ?

Nay, there is none that can fall as I fell.

iii.

And now I know Thee. Like some wondrous
vision

Thou, Soul of Christ, hast crept into my
heart.

Wilt Thou not stay and save me from perdition ?

Ah, most sweet Lord, say Thou wilt not
depart !

iv.

Here is my heart ; it is no house of glory,

It hath no roof upreared to touch the sky,

Nor window blazing with a dead saint's story,

Nor vaulted dome, nor altar rising high,

v.

Nor hath it aught of brightness in its keeping :
It is but flesh, and it is dark with sin,
And myriad faults within its gloom are sleeping ;
But, O Lord Christ, wilt Thou not enter in ?

vi.

Enter, and I will bless Thy name for ever !
I know Thee now, I, who did once blaspheme
Thy Holy Name and swore to serve Thee never,
Have started up affrighted from my dream,

vii.

To find Thee watching by my sore affliction,
Was that the way by which Thou brought'st
me home ?
Ah, blessèd Lord, mine is most true conviction,
Take Thou my hand, nor let me further roam.

viii.

O how I love Thee ! I, for ever blessèd,
Will cling to Thee and at Thy altar kneel ;
But when wilt Thou have half thy love confessèd
O Soul of Christ, that meltest hearts of steel ?

ix.

I have seen all that earth can show of sorrow,
I have known all that man can know of love,
Kissed lips that promised kisses for to-morrow,
Looked into eyes which shone like stars
above,

x.

Clasped hands which trembled with the heart's
emotion,
Smiled back on smiles which tender thoughts
confest,

Whispered warm words which told of true
devotion,
Stood tranced from life and strained to
woman's breast :

xi.

I have known All ; and O, how vastly higher,
How much more wondrous is Thy love, O
Christ,
For those whom Thou hast snatched from out
the fire,
For those for whom Thyself was sacrificed !

xii.

There is no love of father or of mother,
There is no love of maiden or of wife,
There is no love of sister or of brother,
There is no love that lives in any life,

xiii.

Such as the love wherewith, O Thou All-Saving,
Thou hast loved me who am not fit to live.
Didst Thou not die, and, all things calmly
braving,
Come unto me, my black sins to forgive ?

xiv.

O how Thou lov'st me ! Never earthly passion
Was half so strong as is this love of Thine !
Was ever love that loved in this sweet fashion,
Was ever heart that woke such love in mine ?

xv.

I will stay here, O Love and Lord, for ever,
Kissing Thy feet and serving Thee alway ;
I will be Thine, and wander from Thee never,
Until the shadows pass from me away.

II.—i.

Holy Saint Francis of the face benign !

Here in thy cloister, whence the eye looks
down

O'er vine-clad fields upon the little town
Sleeping in sunlight that seems half-divine,
Ten years have passed above this head of mine,
Ten years, sweet years, empty of sigh or
frown.

Yea, 'tis ten years, how quickly are they
flown !

Sweet saint, thou knowest why :—those eyes of
thine

That look on me so calmly from thy place
In highest Heaven, have seen my Lord and
Love.

Yea, thou, O Holy Saint, hast seen His Face,
Thou lookest on It now, and so dost prove
How glorious and how perfect is the grace
Of Him who died on earth and lives above !

ii.

Ten years since all that was of earth went by !
O dear Lord Christ, whom I have served ten
years,
Whose bleeding feet are watered with my tears,
All those ten years Thy presence hath been nigh,
And ah, with Thee who for my sins didst die,
To walk through Hell itself no craven fears
Would my soul have. Thy Hand, once
wounded, cheers
All them that but for Thee in grief would sigh.

Sweet Love, blest Lord, ah, bring me nearer
Thee,

O let me clasp Thy knees, O let me gaze
Upon those eyes that look so pityingly
On the dim souls which lie in this world's
maze.

O let me reach Thee that my lips may be
Endlessly moving in Thy name and praise!

iii.

O glad spring morning that bursts forth even now
Across this land, this sun-kissed Italy,
How fair art thou, how gracious thou to see,
As the red sun, rising behind the brow
Of the white Appenines makes night sink low,
Away in the far west. Yea, unto me,
O happy morn, thou, in thy majesty
Of springtime, when all flowers and blossoms
blow,
H

Art a fair emblem of another day

Which cometh, white with joy and wondrous
bright,

Unto my soul. Ah, it is on the way,

Hasten then, day, and reign once more,
O night,

And day speed on, and night speed, while I pray,

O come, Lord Christ, and fill my soul with
light !

III.

See here, in the Scriptorium, old and grey,
A missal that was not made yesterday,
Nor twenty years since, but has laid here long,
As in a poet's fancy hides a song.
How old it is! What thick rough edges too :
Here's good Saint Francis in a gown of blue,
And the Blest Virgin with the Holy Child,
See his round eyes and little face so mild,

And Herod with his robe and crown awry,
The grave Magicians standing calmly by,
And Saint Veronica beside the cross,
And good Saint John weeping his Master's loss,
And Stephen, looking upward to the skies,
With claspèd hands and supplicating eyes ;
And here the children round our Saviour's
 knees,—

Would that we, brother, were as pure as these !
Ah well, but let us read a little, too,
And see what he, that made this missal, knew.
See, here is written on the opening leaf

“Life is not long, sunshine and storm are brief ;
Ye that here read, as ye to Heaven would go,
Pray for the soul of Fra Angelico.”

Read, brother, then ; the page is open there.

“Long years ago, how long no man can tell,
An angel from on high went down to Hell,
And asked of one that burnt there why he fell.

“To whom the burning one in accents low,
Weeping hot tears the while he spake, said ‘Lo
Because quick pride within my heart did glow

“‘So fearfully that I was lifted high
In my own mind and feared no power, I,
Nor ever thought that God was standing by.

“‘Nor owned him Lord, but day by day waxed
great
In mine own strength and made me desolate,
And in my heart kept stern and awful state.

“‘And yet fell not because of this,—for He
Bears long and well sin 'gainst His Majesty,
And had forgiven at one slight word from me,—

“‘But because I, in malice, once did lay
Dark snares to make a young heart fall away
Whose soul was white as are the buds in May,

“‘And, seeing this, on me God’s anger burst,
‘*Who sins, said He, shall surely be accurst,*
But he that tempts is counted e’er the worst.’

“Then wept he once again and turned to flee
Back to his wilds of hopeless misery
—O thou that readest, take this unto thee,

“And learn that any sin is washed away
Sooner than his that doth a soul betray,
Because that soul is turned from its white
way,—

“Where it had wandered quietly and well,—
Unto the path which leadeth on to Hell,
Wherein the devil and his angels dwell.

“O thou that readest, dost thy memory know
Of any sin against a soul of snow?
God not forgets it if thou hast done so!”

Here ends it then :—

Christ, that dost hear all
prayer,
Who knowest all hearts, though they be not laid
bare,
Who seest all deeds with Thy clear-piercing eye,
Who most art with us when we think Thee far,
Who shinest on us as a guiding star,
Who healest sorrow and dost cast out woe,—
Give, we beseech Thee, from Thy Throne in
Heaven,
Where Thou already him from sin hast shriven,—
Light to the soul of Fra Angelico !

IV.—i.

Angelus sounds across the quiet meadows :
Here let me kneel and intercession make,
Until around me fall the evening shadows,
With her who loves us for her dear Son's sake.

ii.

Mother of God, and Queen of highest heaven !
Ah, Mary, hear us when we ask of thee
To pray for us for whom thy Son has striven,
For whom He died upon the blessed Tree.

iii.

And hearing, kneel in thy sweet solemn whiteness
With all true saints before the Eternal Throne,
Ah, pray for us, and let us feel the lightness
Of perfect peace and know our fault is gone.

iv.

Mary, thine eyes have looked upon Him dying,
Thine arm hath held Him as a little child,
Ah, bid Him look on us all-suppliant lying,
O blessèd One and Virgin undefiled.

v.

Plead with Him, Mother of the sheep that love
Him,
Kneel to Him, Lily of celestial fields!
Mary, thy love is round Him and above Him,
Thy hand can move the sceptre which He
wields.

vi.

O Holy Mother, see, while night comes stealing
Over the hills that watch yon peaceful bay,
The bell that calls us to thy praise is pealing,
And we will praise for ever and for aye.

vii.

Hail, Mary! Hail, Queen, Mother, Saint Most
Glorious!
Kneeling in Heaven before Thy Monarch Son,
Help us to come from out the fight victorious,
Stretch forth thy hand to greet us when 'tis
done!

V.—i.

The tapers gleam, the incense rises slowly ;
Above the towers the stars burn faint and
dim,
While to Thy Name, O Saviour Christ Most
Holy,
Rises the solemn hymn.

ii.

Pray for the dead ! Another soul hath left us,
Another soul hath passed through heaven's
bright door,
He of whose aid and love Thou hast bereft us
Is with Thee evermore.

iii.

Grant him, O God, eternal rest and sweetness ;

Look on the face of Christ Thy Son, and say
The words which give to every life complete-
ness,—

“Thy sins are washed away.”

iv.

Washed out, effaced, because, O One Oblation,

O Lamb of God, O Sacrifice for sin,

Thou, by the might of Thy all-sure Salvation,

Our souls from hell didst win !

VI.—i.

After long years my heart hath come anear Thee,
Soon I shall reach Thee whom I love so well.
O Saviour Christ, what joy to see and hear Thee,
O Holy Lord, how sweet Thy praise to tell!

ii.

Yes, death steals nigh me. Welcome, God's
own angel,
Welcome, blest shadow, bearing sword or
spear,
Thou art to me as is a sweet evangel,
For thou to Him that loves wilt bring me near.

iii.

Dying, you say? Ah me, the news is glorious;
Soon shall I see him who hath all my
thought;
Yes, I shall come from out the fight victorious,
Ransomed by Him that my salvation bought.

iv.

How can I tell you what my heart is feeling?
How can I speak of what my soul expects?
Listen! I hear the angelic anthem stealing,
Or is't some song my fancy recollects?

v.

Do they sing matins in the church below us,
Or is it mass, or is it eventide?
Nay, but in dying God doth often show us
What doth await us at the other side.

vi.

Visions we have of those bright homes of glory,
Visions of what for us is kept in store,
Visions surpassing poet's wildest story,
Visions that slip through heaven's half-opened
door.

vii.

O could I tell you what doth there await me,
O could I say what joy is there for me,
How ye would long through this still vale to
mate me,
How ye would burn with zeal that sight to see !

viii.

Christ, Holy Christ, Sweet Lord and King in
Heaven,
Mary, Blest Mother of the Church below,

Angels and martyrs, sinners from sin shriven,
Virgins with souls more white than new-fall'n
snow,

ix.

Holy St. Peter, with the keys beside thee,
Waiting to ope the gate with eager eyes,
Holy St. Paul, by Him that once did chide thee,
Aid with your prayers my passage to the
skies.

x.

Hail, Holy Saints, fly round Him and above
Him,
Kneel at His feet and kiss the wounds they
bear,
Tell Him I come who passionately love Him,—
Ah, shall I bear it when I see Him there?

xi.

Will it not kill me, this fierce, fond devotion ?
Will it not make me speechless where I stand ?
Nay, for His Love is boundless as the ocean,
And He will clasp me in His strong right hand,

xii.

And bear me onward to the Throne before Him,
To kneel all humbly at the feet of God.
And then—but how shall I, a worm, adore Him ?
How shall I dare to wait His mighty nod ?

xiii.

How shall I dare to look on God the Father ?
How did I dare to look on God the Son ?
Yea, but the Son shall beg His mercy, rather
Than that my soul should faint when life is
done.

xiv.

Yea, He shall pray, shall plead in accents tender
His death till God the Father shrives my soul,
And bids me wait before Him in His splendour
While the vast ages round Him reverent roll.

xv.

Yea, Christ the Saviour, Christ the One Oblation,
Hath found me pardon, and my time is past :
O let me go to join that mighty nation,
O let me look upon His Face at last.

* * * * *

xvi.

Is the mass over ? Do they bring me unction ?—
Christ, who in sacraments to us dost give

All means of grace, bless this most solemn
function,

Forgive my sins, and those of all that live.

xvii.

And now, dear Lord, my soul is coming to Thee,
Ah, by what wondrous ways Thou ledst me
here ;

I had no life, no heart, until I knew Thee,
Until Thy spirit and Thy hand came near.

xviii.

Dost Thou remember ? I, on her grave lying,
Whose love I bless Thee for from morn to
night,
Knew nought of earth and hoped that I was
dying,

Because my life held nothing that was bright,

xix.

And cursing all beneath me and above me,
Heard a still voice as of a spirit say,—
Christ died for thee, and He doth surely love thee,
O wandering soul, that yet shall find the way.

xx.

And Thou dost love me! Christ, my Lord, Thy
Spirit
Hath brought my soul from darkness unto
light,
Not by my works, for they have little merit,
But because Thou hast washed my red heart
white.

xxi.

Yea, Thou hast died, and Thou art daily offered;
Thou, the New Bloodless Sacrifice, each morn

By Thy priest's hands to God the Father
proffered,

Cleansest the hearts of them that are forlorn.

xxii.

O that my lips could tell Thee how I love Thee !

O that my mouth could kiss Thy wounded
side,

O that my deeds Thy servant aye could prove
me,

O that my soul were fit to be Thy Bride !

xxiii.

I come, sweet Jesus. Yea, the fight is over !

See, there is Death equipped with shining
sword,

His radiant vesture o'er my head doth hover,

And he is come to fetch me to my Lord.

xxiv.

Brothers whom I have loved so long and
dearly,
Whose souls to Christ and hearts to men
are true,
Ye will say mass for me at morning early,
And I will pray in Heaven all day for you.

xxv.

O the blest joy, the happiness, the glory,
O the sweet vision and the scarce-felt fear!
Ah, to be able to tell Christ my story,
Ah, to be certain that my King is near!

xxvi.

Finished the fight and gone the strong tempta-
tion;
The portals reached and earth far fled away:

Sure in the strength of Christ the Lord's salvation,
Sure in the prospect of the endless day.

xxvii.

Christ! Is it Thou? Is this the hand they
nailed,
Is this the wound they made in Thy sweet
side?
Ah, but I love Thee, and I have prevailed,
I have come cleansed across yon heaving tide.

xxviii.

Christ! O sweet eyes, O hand so soft and tender,
O clasp so firm that bearest me above!
O what bright bliss, what beauty and what
splendour,
O Christ my King, my Lord, my Life, my Love!

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